

Dear Members of the Montana Legislature,

We are family members of murder victims. We desperately miss the parents, children, siblings, spouses, and other loved ones we have lost. We live with the pain and heartbreak of their absence every day and would do anything to have them back. We have been touched by the criminal justice system in ways we never imagined and would never wish on anyone. Our experience compels us to speak out for change.

We are writing today to ask your support in passing Senate Bill 185, which would replace Montana's death penalty with life without parole. Though we share different perspectives on the death penalty, all 53 of us agree that Montana's capital punishment system does not work for victims' families and that our state is better off without it.

To be meaningful, justice should be swift and sure. Life without parole, which begins immediately, is both of these; the death penalty is neither. Capital punishment drags victims' loved ones through an agonizing and lengthy process that holds out the promise of one punishment in the beginning and often results in a life sentence in the end anyway. A life without parole sentence right from the start would keep society safe, hold killers responsible for their brutal and depraved acts, and would start as soon as we left the courtroom instead of leaving us in limbo.

At the same time, a system of life without parole in place of the death penalty would save scarce funds. In Montana, we have spent a countless amount of taxpayers' money and diverted endless hours of court and law enforcement time to our capital punishment system. What has it bought us? Years worth of appeals, overturned sentences, and a system so broken that fixing it is impossible - all for what? Three executions that took decades to achieve.

Those resources could be spent in better ways if death-eligible killers were sentenced to life without parole. Law enforcement programs that work might have prevented the tragedies we suffered at only a fraction of the cost. A legal system free from the resource drain of the capital punishment system could find, prosecute, and sentence countless other criminals and even take dangerous people off the streets before they commit murder. Dollars saved could mean more counseling and aid to children orphaned by these horrible murders, or other services we so desperately need as we attempt to get on with our lives.

Only a handful of arbitrarily selected murderers are sentenced to death. Many of our loved ones' murderers did not receive an expensive trial or death sentence. Does that mean that some of our loved ones' lives were worth less? This policy is simply not worth the tremendous financial and emotional price.

It is vitally important that our state address the needs of surviving family and friends as we struggle to heal. We know that elected officials who promote the death penalty often do so with the best intentions of helping family members like us. We are writing to say that there are better ways to help us. The death penalty is a broken and costly system. Montana doesn't need it, and victims' families like ours don't want it.

Signed,

**Amy Raftery Holzer**

*Victim:* Paul A. Raftery, brother  
Murdered in Helena, MT

**Anna G. Valan**

*Victim:* Steve Tungseth, uncle  
Anna resides in Missoula, MT

**Anne Raftery**

*Victim:* Paul A. Raftery, brother  
Murdered in Helena, MT

**Antoinette Bosco**

*Victims:* John and Nancy Bosco,  
son and daughter-in-law  
Murdered in Bigfork, MT

**Betty Hawthorn**

*Victim:* Molly MacDougall, niece  
Betty resides in Philipsburg, MT

**Bill Rossiter**

*Victim:* Rev. John Rossiter, uncle  
Bill resides in Kalispell, MT

**Bruce B. Huff**

*Victim:* Robert Stanley Gordon,  
half brother  
Bruce resides in Great Falls, MT

**Carolyn Mad Plume**

*Victim:* Catherine Mad Plume,  
daughter  
Murdered outside Ronan, MT  
Carolyn resides in Heart Butte, MT

**Charlene Old Chief**

*Victim:* Israel, husband  
Murdered in Browning, MT  
Charlene resides in Browning, MT

**Darwin Simac**

*Victim:* Donna Meagher, sister  
Murdered in Montana City, MT  
Darwin resides in Montana City, MT

**Debbie Mulcahy**

*Victim:* Donna Meagher, sister  
Murdered in Montana City, MT  
Debbie resides in Kalispell, MT

**Diane "Weezee" Cote**

*Victim:* Tasheena Tis Craft, daughter  
Murdered in Arlee, MT  
Weezee resides in Arlee, MT

**Eamon Marsh**

*Victim:* Francis Marsh, brother-in-law  
Eamon resides in Missoula, MT

**Elvira Day Child**

*Victim:* Alton Boyd Alexander,  
nephew  
Murdered in Box Elder, MT  
Elvira resides in Box Elder, MT

**Eve Malo**

*Victim:* Grace Macdonald,  
grandmother  
Eve resides in Dillon, MT

**Henry Day Child, Sr.**

*Victim:* Alton Boyd Alexander,  
nephew  
Murdered in Box Elder, MT  
Henry resides in Box Elder, MT

**James A. "Ziggy" Ziegler**

*Victim:* John Ziegler, father  
Ziggy resides in Billings, MT

(continued)

**Fr. Jim Connor**

*Victim:* Albert Cowan, grandfather  
Murdered in Victor, MT  
Jim resides in Polson, MT

**Jim Dominick**

*Victim:* "Gubby" Dominick, uncle  
Jim resides in Box Elder, MT

**Jimmy Malatare**

*Victim:* Catherine Mad Plume, niece  
Murdered outside Ronan, MT  
Jimmy resides in Arlee, MT

**Joseph Maheras**

*Victim:* Joseph's nephew  
Joseph resides in Billings, MT

**Karl Olson**

*Victim:* Katherine Olson, sister  
Karl resides in Missoula, MT

**Kimberly Warhank**

*Victim:* Walt Sullivan, uncle  
Murdered in Shelby, MT  
Kimberly resides in Helena, MT

**Laurie Budlong-Morse**

*Victim:* Daniel Moser, cousin  
Laurie resides in Helena, MT

**Lavonne Hohn**

*Victim:* Donna Meagher, daughter  
Murdered in Montana City, MT  
Lavonne resides in Helena, MT

**Margarita McLarty**

*Victim:* Rosalind Goodrich Bates,  
grandmother  
Margarita resides in Livingston, MT

**Marietta Jaeger-Lane**

*Victim:* Susan Marie Jaeger, daughter  
Murdered outside Three Forks, MT  
Marietta resides in Three Forks, MT

**Martha Poelman**

*Victim:* Bernard Poelman, son  
Murdered near Manhattan, MT  
Martha resides in Manhattan, MT

**Mary Kay Raftery**

*Victim:* Paul A. Raftery, son  
Murdered in Helena, MT

**Mary Maheras**

*Victim:* Mary's nephew  
Mary resides in Billings, MT

**Mary Molitor**

*Victims:* Louise and August Kernze,  
cousin, cousin's husband  
Murdered in Three Forks, MT  
Mary resides in Boulder, MT

**Mary Poelman**

*Victim:* Bernard Poelman, uncle  
Murdered near Manhattan, MT  
Mary resides in Helena, MT

**Mary van Valkenburg**

*Victims:* John and Nancy Bosco,  
brother and sister-in-law  
Murdered in Bigfork, MT

**Marysue Davis**

*Victim:* Tommy Irwin, cousin  
Murdered in Wyola, MT  
Marysue resides in Malta, MT

**Matthew Raftery**

*Victim:* Paul A. Raftery, brother  
Murdered in Helena, MT

(continued)

**Michael P. Thornton**

*Victim:* Ester Drinkwalter,  
grandmother  
Michael resides in Dillon, MT

**Michele McGuirl**

*Victim:* Stephanie Ciemiecki, cousin  
Michele resides in Missoula, MT

**Monica Gallegos-Laeupple**

*Victim:* Sylvia Quayle, cousin  
Monica resides in Havre, MT

**Pauline M. Sjordal**

*Victim:* Victor Clifford Sjordal, father  
Murdered in Kalispell, MT  
Pauline resides in Kalispell, MT

**Pierre Malatare**

*Victim:* Catherine Mad Plume, niece  
Murdered outside Ronan, MT  
Pierre resides in Ronan, MT

**Rachelle Meagher Miller**

*Victim:* Donna Meagher, mother  
Murdered in Montana City, MT

**Rebecca Hargis**

*Victim:* Rachel Hargis, mother  
Rebecca resides in Jefferson City, MT

**Richard Bishop**

*Victim:* Anne Cournoyer, daughter's  
mother  
Richard resides in Stevensville, MT

**Robert P. Raftery**

*Victim:* Paul A. Raftery, son  
Murdered in Helena, MT

**Sharon Kaberline**

*Victim:* Shirley Hamilton, mother  
Sharon resides in Helena, MT

**Shelly Calf Robe**

*Victim:* Catherine Mad Plume, sister  
Murdered outside Ronan, MT  
Shelly resides in Heart Butte, MT

**Stella A. Ziegler**

*Victim:* John Ziegler, father-in-law  
Stella resides in Billings, MT

**Susan Finley**

*Victim:* Catherine Mad Plume, cousin  
Murdered outside Ronan, MT  
Susan resides in Ronan, MT

**Susan K. DeBree**

*Victim:* Gretchen DeBree, daughter  
Murdered in Great Falls, MT  
Susan resides in Helena, MT

**Tom Green**

*Victim:* Richard Green, brother  
Murdered in Wolf Point, MT  
Tom resides in Wolf Point, MT

**Tony Poelman**

*Victim:* Bernard Poelman, brother  
Murdered near Manhattan, MT  
Tony resides in Helena, MT

**Vicki Mahkuk**

*Victim:* Catherine Mad Plume, niece  
Murdered outside Ronan, MT  
Vicki resides in Ronan, MT

**William Kronholm**

*Victim:* Ray Kronholm, uncle  
William resides in Helena, MT